

News Release



Stillwater National Wildlife Refuge Complex
1000 Auction Road
Fallon, Nevada 89406

Contact: Janet Schmidt, (775)428-6452
March 15, 2002

STILLWATER NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE COMPLEX CELEBRATES 99TH BIRTHDAY OF NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SYSTEM

2003 Will Mark 100 Years of Conservation Success

To celebrate the 99th anniversary of the founding of the National Wildlife Refuge System, Stillwater Complex will again co-host the Spring Wings Bird Festival, May 10-12, 2002, at the Fallon Convention Center, 100 Campus Way. The festival, now in its 5th year, will include activities for the entire family such as birding tours, wildlife art and trade show, storytelling by naturalist, Ane Rovetta, and seminars by local birding experts. Our special guests this year are Bill Thompson, III, editor of *Birdwatcher's Digest* and his wife, Julie Zickefoose, zoologist and artist. Bill and Julie will do a special birding tour and provide the keynote speech for Saturday night following the banquet and auction at the Fallon Naval Air Station.

Weekend events will feature a variety of tours to Stillwater National Wildlife Refuge, Carson Lake, Anaho Island National Wildlife Refuge in Pyramid Lake, and other birding sites in the Lahontan Valley wetlands. A unique tour of a local ranch will bring home the special relationship between agriculture and wildlife in the Lahontan Valley. Friday night's speaker will be former Fallon resident, Steve Thompson, now manager of California/Nevada Operations for the US Fish and Wildlife Service. He will speak on "The Lahontan Valley, Where We've Been, and Where We're Going". This talk will be open to the public.

The Spring Wings Festival coincides with the height of spring migration at the Lahontan Valley wetlands. These internationally-recognized wetlands are temporary home to over 250 species of birds, including thousands of White-faced Ibis, Long-billed dowitcher, and many other water birds. Additional information can be found by viewing the festival website at www.springwings.org.

With more than 10,000 visitors each year who generate more than \$25,000 annually in recreational spending, Stillwater National Wildlife Refuge Complex not only helps protect a healthy environment for people, fish and wildlife, but also provides economic support for the local community.

Recreational visits to national wildlife refuges generate substantial economic activity throughout the United States. In 1995, for example, people visited refuges more than 27.7 million times, generating \$401.1 million in sales for regional economies, which employed more than 10,000 people and produced more than \$162.9 million in employment income.

-2-

-more-

Beginning with first national wildlife refuge designated at Pelican Island, Florida, on March 14, 1903, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Wildlife Refuge System has grown to include 538 refuges and wetland management districts encompassing 94 million acres. With at least one refuge in every state and U.S. territory, the National Wildlife Refuge System provides sustainable recreation that generates economic support to communities across the country. Today, more than 35 million Americans visit and enjoy national wildlife refuges each year and are a continuing source of recreation dollars spent on food, lodging, and purchases from local businesses for hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and other activities.

The National Wildlife Refuge System, the only system of federal land devoted specifically to wildlife, is a network of diverse and strategically located habitats, teeming with millions of migratory birds, serving as safe haven for hundreds of endangered species and hosting an enormous variety of other plants and animals.

When President Theodore Roosevelt made Florida's tiny Pelican Island a refuge for birds in 1903, he wrote the first chapter of America's greatest conservation success story. A century in the making, this story of safeguarding America's migratory birds, animals, and important fisheries keeps getting better and better. There are wildlife refuges in every state, and at least one within an hour's drive of most major cities.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 94-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System which encompasses 538 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 70 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resource offices and 78 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

- FWS -

*For more information about the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service,
visit our home page at <http://www.fws.gov>*